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Cell in a Human Scale

29 November 2011 No Comment

Written by: [Ayelet Dekel](#)

Cell in a Human Scale by Sahar Azimi and Tamara Erde is a visual dance work with a mission: to raise awareness of AIDS. One would think that this is a task that has been accomplished many times over by now; thirty years after AIDS first came to widespread public attention in 1981. Yet paradoxically, the medical advances in treating the disease have induced in many a false sense of complacency and careless attitude towards prevention, while the stigma associated with AIDS often makes people reluctant to be tested for the HIV virus, or admit that they have been infected – all contributing to the spread of the disease.

Yet the success of this particular mission depends on the extent to which the work communicates as a work of art, and *Cell in a Human Scale* is an expressive work of art. Speaking to the senses and emotions it has the ability to go beyond statistics and logic to open minds and hearts.



Cell in a Human Scale/Photo: David Adika

Video art, movement, design and sound come together to create an emotionally charged environment that delivers a profound message. It is a work that would certainly stand alone, communicating effectively to the viewer independent of the background knowledge conveyed in the program notes. In other words – even someone who had never heard of AIDS would have a clear sense of the alienation, desires, difficulty and struggles expressed by the characters in this work as they interact with one another and with their environment.

As the audience entered, the room was dark with Azimi lying on the floor, Erde illuminating him in a trapeze of light. The white space and immobile body suggest a hospital room or morgue. An abstracted environment is projected on the white wall behind the two dancers, something between a prison cell and hospital room with its functional white bed, cabinet, bath and toilet and the barred window.

Azimi begins almost imperceptibly to move, rising with his back to the audience, his bare body painted white. As he spins immersed in a deep solitude, shadow figures float across the wall, a dream world enhanced by the music. The space fills with images and the background shifts from white to black, light to

dark.

A richly complex visual world develops in the video, creating a dialogue with the dancers on the floor. A narrative voice enters into this dialogue at two crucial junctures within the work, intimate entries from a personal journal. Azimi is a gifted, expressive dancer whose works as a choreographer have often invoked the harsh terrain of strong emotions. Time and again he rises with difficulty from the floor. Azimi dances with tensile strength and beauty, while his image looms large on the wall, literally scraping the skin to reveal the hidden layers of an embattled body. At times there is a look of unutterable sorrow on his face.

Yet there is also a sense of healing for performers and audience together in the shared experience, the honesty of emotions distilled into art. One cannot remain unaffected by this performance – and that is where hope lives.

Cell in a Human Scale will be performed as part of International Exposure on Thursday, December 1, 2011 at 22:30 in the Varda Studio, Suzanne Dellal Centre.

Cell in a Human Scale

Co-creators and performers: Sahar Azimi and Tamara Erde

Lighting design: Dani Fishof; Original music and sound design: Didi Erez, Japan by CocoRosie, Kiss Kiss by Yoko Ono; Art and costume design: Anna Waisman



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